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Indiana In The Mexican War

By R. C. BULEY, A.M.

THE INDIANA VOLUNTEERS

For a long time the impression has prevailed in the State that Indiana's Mexican War record was not entirely to her credit, and that the period from 1846 to 1848 constituted a chapter in her history best passed hurriedly over. The facts of the case by no means uphold this view. Indiana, a northern State, and not directly influenced by economic motives, as were the southern States, furnished for the war recruits for two whole companies of United States infantry,¹ three companies of United States mounted riflemen, one company of dragoons,² and five regiments of volunteers.³ Some three hundred of her citizens, failing to get in the regiments of their own State, enrolled from Kentucky. Whatever blunders mar the military record of the State in the war were not those of the rank and file, but of the officers, or directly the result of political interference in the officering of the regiments.

Though Indiana played a prominent part in the military events of the war, this role was of minor importance compared to the political effects resulting from the war. Not only did the war and Indiana's part in it furnish new issues, new men, and new fields for State politics, but on at least one occasion seriously concerned national politics.

In 1843 and 1844 the Democratic party made sweeping successes in Indiana. This was largely due to the fact that it broke away from the old issues of the past and struck out along new lines.⁴ In 1843 the Democrats elected their first governor of the State, James Whitcomb. Eight out of ten congressmen elected were also Democrats. In 1844, in

¹ 16th United States Infantry.

² 1st Dragoons.

³ Oran Perry, *Indiana in the Mexican War*, 5.

⁴ Esarey, *History of Indiana*. 468.

spite of the Whig denunciation of the proposed annexation of Texas as a step not favored by the people, a scheme of the South for the spread of slavery, unconstitutional and un-American in policy, the Democrats carried the State for James K. Polk. Although the war was frequently referred to by the Whigs as a Democratic War, or "Polk's Little War," when it came to sending men to the front, Whigs as well as Democrats were ready to take up arms.

Throughout the year of 1845 there was a general feeling in the air that the United States would be drawn into war with Mexico. Many Indianians, Whigs as well as Democrats, were of the opinion that war with Mexico, as a consequence of the admission of Texas as a State, was justifiable. Annexation was looked upon as far more desirable than to leave Texas to drift in uncertain currents, possibly to join European alliances, which this United States would afterward be compelled, in self-defense, to destroy.⁵

Four months after the annexation of Texas, General Zachary Taylor sailed from New Orleans and established a camp at Corpus Christi. Early in February, 1846, the "army of occupation" set out for the Rio Grande, and on March 28 pitched its tents opposite Matamoras. On March 21 the American minister to Mexico received his passports and returned to the United States. Shortly after this congress passed an act "providing for the prosecution of the existing war between the United States and the Republic of Mexico."⁶ This act enabled the President to call for volunteers, not to exceed 50,000 in numbers, to serve for twelve months, and appropriated \$10,000,000 for the war. The State militia could be compelled to serve not over six months in any year. May 22, 1846, came the first call for volunteers in Indiana in the form of the following message from Governor Whitcomb:

⁵ France went so far as to make her recognition of Texas depend upon the condition that Texas should not join the United States. This proposal was supported by an influential party of Texans. Lew Wallace, *Autobiography*, 102, Mr. James G. Blaine later said concerning the Mexican War: "It was a wiser policy to annex Texas and accept the issue of immediate war with Mexico, than to leave Texas in nominal independence to involve us probably in ultimate war with England. The history of subsequent events has entirely vindicated the wisdom, courage, and statesmanship with which the Democratic party dealt with this question in 1844."

⁶ Approved, May 13, 1846.

Whereas, The territory of our common country has been invaded, and the blood of our citizens has been shed upon our own soil by a hostile force from the Republic of Mexico after repeated attempts on the part of the United States for an honorable settlement of all existing differences with that power, which have been met only with indifference and contempt; and

Whereas, By an act of the Congress of the United States entitled "An Act providing for the prosecution of the existing war between the United States and the Republic of Mexico," approved on the 13th of the present month, the President of the United States is authorized, in addition to other provisions therein contained for the prosecution of said war to a speedy and successful termination, to call for and accept the services of any number of volunteers, not exceeding 50,000, either as cavalry, artillery, infantry or riflemen; and

Whereas, By a communication from the Secretary of War, dated the 16th inst., received late last evening, and enclosing a copy of the aforesaid act, the undersigned is requested on the part of the President to cause to be organized at the earliest practicable period, for the aforesaid service, three regiments of volunteers, to be infantry or riflemen, and to designate some convenient place of rendezvous for moving towards Mexico, for the several companies, as fast as they shall be organized, where they will be further organized into regiments preparatory to moving towards Mexico; said companies and regiments to be clothed, armed, organized, officered, inspected and mustered into the service, according to the regulations contained in the subjoined memorandum, as gathered from the aforesaid requisition and act of Congress;

Now *therefore*, I James Whitcomb, Governor of the State of Indiana, do issue this my proclamation, appealing to the citizens of our United States, by their love of country and its noble institutions, by their sense of the wanton and unprovoked invasion of our territory and the effusion of kindred blood by a foreign and perfidious foe, by their desire to emulate the deeds of noble daring which have so proudly distinguished the older members of our confederacy, in our earlier history; and by their desire to adopt the best means under the favor of divine Providence, for a speedy termination of the war, and an early restoration of peace, to form themselves into volunteer companies with all dispatch, for the aforesaid service, and to report forthwith to this Department the fact of their organization, so that early orders may be given them to march to New Albany, in this State, which is hereby designated as the place of rendezvous, preparatory to moving towards Mexico.

THE MILITARY CONDITION OF INDIANA IN 1846

At the outbreak of the Mexican War the martial spirit of the people of Indiana was at low ebb. Previous to its admission as a State, the militia of Indiana had been kept in excellent condition, but with the passing of the War of 1812 and of Indian troubles, interest in military affairs waned. Few

of the generation then living had ever been stirred by the trampling of the war horse or seen the bloody field of battle. During the long years of quiet all had turned to the pursuits of peace. Without war it was hard to induce the people to return to a military organization. Notwithstanding the gradual paralysis of the general system, the martial spirit was not entirely extinguished. This much was evident from the existence of a number of companies of independent militia and a few regiments of district militia. But in these it had become almost impossible to revive military discipline unless some exigency demanded active service.

By an act of 1843 the citizens liable to military duty could form volunteer companies whenever they saw fit. Each company was to consist of not less than thirty-two rank and file, and every member enrolled was liable for duty for six years if he remained a citizen of the county in which he enrolled.⁷ Although this law still remained on the statute books, by 1846 its existence was practically unknown. The State had no organized militia, and no military equipment worthy of notice. The "cornstalk"⁸ militia had become a joke. The adjutant-general was a mere title holder, who drew one hundred dollars per annum and provided his own fuel and stationery. He was usually ignorant of the requirements of his office. The militia officers had become purely nominal, without duties.

The adjutant-general realized the sad condition of affairs and, in 1845, candidly stated that his report would be brief, for it was impossible for the few general officers who held commissions to furnish him with any other data for a report save now and then the return of an election.⁹

A commission had been appointed by the General Assembly in 1843 to investigate the condition of military affairs. By an act of congress 1808 a sum was appropriated, to be distributed among the States according to the numerical military strength of each. Indiana was still drawing on the basis of 1832, because the adjutant-general had not been able to report Indiana's strength since then, for the good reason that

⁷ *Indiana State Laws*, 1843. 17, Chapter VII.

⁸ So called because they frequently used cornstalks instead of guns on drill, and wore corn tassels in their caps as distinctive dress.

⁹ Report of Adjutant-General Reynolds to Governor, 1845. *Documentary Journal*, 1845, part II, 37.

the commandants of divisions and brigades had not reported to him. Under the apportionment of 1832, Indiana's quota of arms in 1845 was 430 muskets, costing about thirteen or fourteen dollars each. Since the population had more than doubled, under a correct return the State should have received 930 muskets, or about \$13,020 worth. The loss in value of arms to the State in ten years totaled approximately \$70,000.¹⁰ A law of 1842 required bonds for the security of the arms in possession of the State and the adjutant-general was having a difficult task collecting the arms scattered throughout Indiana.¹¹ From nine companies, 753 arms, yagers, Hall's rifles, muskets, swords, pistols, etc., were collected, for which no bonds were ever given, and 426 bonded pieces were called in. Three hundred and fifty-six firearms were given out under bond to twelve companies. In the armory there were 398 firearms and at Madison about 280 more.¹² These arms constituted the entire equipment of the State.

Although thus poorly equipped in the materials for making war, Indiana was fortunate in having, in the position of adjutant-general, a man who, in case of necessity, could accomplish things. David Reynolds was a pleasant-appearing man, "stout, rubicund and affable." He had never yet appeared in uniform. He knew nothing military, and made no pretensions to such knowledge.¹³ He didn't even appreciate his title. Yet he was intelligent and willing to learn, possessed courage, some executive ability, common sense, and was a tireless worker. When the call for volunteers was issued and many anxious young men called upon General Reynolds for information, they found him in a flustered condition, much like an old hen unexpectedly visited by a hawk.¹⁴ There were a hundred things to be done and no one who knew exactly how to do them. Blanks were to be prepared; books had to be opened and kept; things that would have been done long before but for the lack of needful appropriation. Like the inexperience

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Jan. 8, 1846, the adjutant-general received a circular from the war department calling his attention to the importance of reporting, according to act of congress, March 2, 1803, the returns of the militia of the state. *Documentary Journal*, 1845, II, 45.

¹² Report of Quartermaster, 1845. *Doc. Jr.*, 1845, II, 38.

¹³ Wallace, *Autobiography*, 108.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

of the Governor, that of General Reynolds heightened the confusion of the staff officers. Indiana was called upon to raise three regiments. The business was entirely new; there were no forms or precedents to be followed.

In this work Governor Whitcomb gave what assistance he could, but raising a volunteer army was entirely out of his line of work. James Whitcomb was a lover of books, and always kept a useful library about him. When not busy he delighted in driving away care with the music of the violin, on which he was no mean performer. The Governor was also a smoker, and blowing smoke rings did not seem to interfere with his thinking. His greatest hobby was smoking a cigar to its smallest dimensions. To accomplish this he often thrust a knife blade into the stump, and was even known to use a pin for this purpose. Although a statesman of ability, James Whitcomb was not a soldier. But he rose to the demands of the occasion to the best of his ability.

FILLING THE QUOTA

It was at once evident that the real problem would not consist in securing the men required for Indiana's quota, but in organizing and equipping the volunteers. The war spirit took hold and spread throughout the State in a remarkably short time. Stirring mass meetings were held in the towns and cities. At Indianapolis, May 22, the citizens met at the court house. The Governor's proclamation and the acts of congress on the war were read. Resolutions were drawn up to the effect that, in any conflict involving the national honor, the people of the West, without regard to political distinction, would be found united as one man, zealously supporting the government of their country and rallying around the national flag. In the crisis they were in favor of prompt and energetic action, and heartily approved of the recommendation of the President that a large and overpowering force be immediately sent to the seat of war as the best means of bringing the conflict with Mexico to a speedy termination. Any appeal to patriotism would be met with promptness and cheerfulness. They expected congress to make ample provisions for carrying the war into the enemy's country, and hoped to see "the star-spangled banner" planted in the City

of Mexico on the "Halls of the Montezumas," as the best mode of securing an honorable peace. In the opinion of the people the time had come when every consideration of duty and patriotism required them to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of their country.¹⁵

At Madison, May 20, a similar meeting was held. A large number of the citizens met at the court house and listened to an address by General Milton Stapp.¹⁶ The Madison *Banner* was much elated, and spoke of the spirit shown in the following vein: "We are now all Whigs and all Democrats. We are American citizens, and as such, right or wrong, we are for our country. It is not the time to cavil about party." These are typical examples of the meetings held in all parts of the State.

Recruiting had been going on ever since the first week in February, when Lieutenant Love of the United States Dragoons began in Indianapolis.¹⁷ In Madison Captain Abram Hendricks and Lieutenant Hughes rapidly filled up their company for the Sixteenth Infantry, under the command of Colonel J. W. Tibbets.

When the assignment of three regiments of volunteers came to Indiana, recruiting began in earnest. Many of the independent militia companies enrolled just as they were. Scores of young men took it upon themselves to raise companies, hoping to be rewarded for their trouble with the captaincy. One of these young men who raised a company was Lew Wallace, later a major-general in the Civil War. When the rumor came to Indianapolis that the government had issued a call for troops, he determined to go to Mexico. There was much talk of volunteering around the capitol. Wallace interviewed members of the "Greys" and "Arabs," arguing that the term, one year, was short. Some replied earnestly, as though experienced, that there was plenty of time in which to die. So he resolved to open a recruiting office himself. Taking a room on Washington street, he hired a drummer and a fifer. Outside he hung a flag and a four-sided transparency, inscribed "For Mexico, Fall In." When

¹⁵ Madison *Courier*, May 30, 1846.

¹⁶ *Indiana Democrat*, May 22, 1846.

¹⁷ *Indiana State Journal*, Feb. 8, 1847.

he started a parade a dozen or more men fell in on the first round. The company was soon filled. James P. Drake was made captain, John McDougal, first lieutenant, and Wallace, second lieutenant. So it was all over the State. The main cause for anxiety on the part of those raising companies was not whether they would get enough men to fill them, but whether they would get them reported to the adjutant-general before the thirty companies required were already selected.

Nor was the war spirit confined to the men of the State. The women were deeply agitated and, besides helping outfit the volunteers and provide for their material wants, they added much to the glamor and romance of going to war. More than one would-be hero found it easier to go to war because it was expected of him, and he more or less correctly surmised that a military reputation would weigh heavily in his favor. The Ladies' Aid societies and other organizations all competed with each other and those of other towns in making for their relatives and friends fine-looking and serviceable uniforms, beautiful banners, and supplying them with many little comforts that would be useful in a campaign far from home. It took the ladies of Madison only from Wednesday, June 3, till Saturday to supply William Ford's company with uniforms. But the present into which the women put their best efforts and all their talent was always the company banner. The stars and stripes, hand sewn in silk, were presented with impressive ceremony to all the companies, and they vowed to carry them to victory and glory.

June 10, just nineteen days after the call for volunteers was issued, the thirtieth and last company of volunteers was accepted and commissioned. One week later twenty extra companies had reports at the adjutant-general's office.¹⁸ Ohio, with three times the population of Indiana and wealthier in proportion, was called upon for the same number of volunteers and had two days the start of Indiana. Yet Indiana's quota was ready as soon as that of her neighbor.

The facilities for travel and transportation in Indiana in 1846 were meager. With the exception of the Michigan

¹⁸ Some of the most ambitious companies repaired to the rendezvous hoping to get a place by the failure of some accepted company to turn up by the appointed time. Captain William M. McCarty's company of Brookville was one of these.

road, the Lafayette and Jeffersonville turnpike and the Old Vincennes and New Albany road, the highways of the State were in poor condition. There was but one railroad, and this ran from Madison north only to Edinburg. The volunteers from all over the central and northern parts of the State converged toward this point. As a rule they had no trouble getting patriotic farmers to take them in their wagons. With the frolic and picnic-like gaiety of the departure from their home towns was mixed enough uncertainty and realization of hardships to come, to impart a serious vein to the farewells. At most of the towns it seemed that the whole country turned out to see "the boys" leave. Thousands shook hands as if they never expected to see them return. From Edinburg the men slowly crept down the rails to Madison, and from there went down the river or walked to "Old Fort Clark," three miles above New Albany.

The organization of the regiments and the resulting problem of debts incurred in raising them brought forth the best efforts of the State officials. May 20 the Governor wrote to the Secretary of War and inquired whether loans advanced for aiding the volunteers would likely be repaid by the United States government. Five days later he sent a circular to the banks in the State, asking them to make loans to help in clothing the volunteers. The Indianapolis branch answered with an advance of \$10,000. The Madison branch, by a unanimous vote of the directors, placed \$10,000 at the disposal of the Governor, should he find use for this sum in facilitating the movement of Indiana volunteers, and the Lawrenceburg branch resolved to honor the draft of Governor Whitcomb to the extent of a like amount.¹⁹ The Vincennes, Terre Haute and South Bend branches signified their desire, but inability, to aid in the good work.

The first order for the organization of the volunteers corps was issued by the Governor about the middle of May.²⁰ The volunteers were to furnish their own clothing and to serve twelve months. With the exception of clothing and pay, they were to be placed on the same footing with similar corps of the regular army. A volunteer company was limited to eighty

¹⁹ New Albany, Evansville, Fort Wayne, and Lafayette also responded favorably.

²⁰ May 13.

privates. In other respects the organization did not differ from that of the United States army. A company consisted of one captain, one first lieutenant, one second lieutenant, four sergeants, four corporals, two musicians and eighty privates. The commissioned officers of each company were to be elected after the company was full, by a majority of the members present, at a time and place designated by the majority of the company. The judges and clerks were to certify the election to the adjutant-general. The regimental commissioned officers were to be elected in the same way. The volunteers were to have the same pay and allowances as the regulars.²¹ By a supplemental act of congress June 4, 1846, the pay of the volunteers was raised to ten dollars per month, with three dollars and a half in lieu of clothing. The adjutant-general suggested that, in the way of clothing, each man should have for service uniform a cloth or forage cap, a gray mixed or sky blue jeans hunter's frock coat, and pantaloons without straps. A dress or parade uniform was not required.

POLITICS AT CAMP CLARK

Camp Clark, or Camp Whitcomb, as it was sometimes called, was about midway between the cities of New Albany and Jeffersonville. Here, two generations before, George Rogers Clark and his men had received their reward for valiant service to Virginia and the States. The volunteer companies all arrived in due time. Colonel Churchill, inspector-general of the United States army, was sent to Indiana to inspect and muster in the troops. The romance and attractiveness of war first began to dim at Camp Clark. The weather was hot, the only water to be had was dirty river water and there were the usual hitches in the commissary department. Added to these physical discomforts was a system of petty politics and political scheming which got most of the volunteers in a very bad humor. Governor Whitcomb and Lieutenant-Governor Paris C. Dunning were on hand to see that their favorites were well taken care of. A ticket or "slate" was prepared in each of the regiments, for the field officers. Many of the volunteers were puzzled to

²¹ Governor Whitcomb's Orders; by act of congress of May 13, 1848.

find in the First Regiment, no contest for the positions and no scratching of the ballots. Their experience was too limited to enable them to comprehend such a simple expedient as a "slate". The candidates favorable to the State powers were successful in every instance. Aided by the Governor's influence, William A. Bowles, who did more in the war to bring disgrace upon the State than all her volunteers, finally won the contested election for the colonelcy of the Second. It was also charged that the President handed out commissions in the army in exchange for votes against the Wilmot Proviso.²² Most of the dirty intriguing at Camp Clark fell to the lot of Paris C. Dunning. He was often referred to as the "Big Dog" around the camp.²³

The larger slate of the day was as follows: Brigadier-general, Joseph Lane (Dem.); colonel of First regiment, James P. Drake (Dem.); colonel of Second, William A. Bowles (Dem.); colonel of Third, James H. Lane (Dem.). Evidently someone knew how to provide opportunities for military reputations and political careers.²⁴

The appointment of brigadier-general by the President was sought by many western members of congress as a prize for their constituents. Approximately fifty names had been handed in. Congressman Robert Dale Owen, in whose district Lane resided, did not seem to manifest much interest in the appointment, and probably would not have submitted a name but for the suggestion of one of the Indiana senators.²⁵ Owen said he had not offered a candidate, as there were no candidates from his district, but if it were proper to name one he would submit the name of "Joe" Lane. President Polk made the appointment. He told Owen that he hoped he had considered his man well, as the position was a responsible one. Owen replied that he knew nothing of Lane's military talent, but that he had those elements of character which, in times of difficulty, made men rally instinctively around him as a leader. That had been the case in early days, when lawless men infested the river border. Had all the officers of Indiana

²² *Indiana Journal*, April 2, 1846.

²³ *Wabash Express, State Journal*, July 15, 1847.

²⁴ Jos. H. Lane was first elected colonel of the Second regiment, but that office was left open by his appointment to brigadier-generalship.

²⁵ *Indiana Sentinel*, May 17, 1848.

performed their duty as did General Lane there would have been little complaint.

The election of the regimental officers took place June 24. For the field officers of the First regiment there was but one ticket. The names were: Colonel James P. Drake, of Indianapolis; lieutenant-colonel, Christopher C. Nave, of Danville; major, Henry S. Lane, of Crawfordsville. There was no regular opposition to Drake and the two other men had a clear field. Not one of these officers could have carried his company through the manual of arms.²⁶

Colonel Drake, an innkeeper at Indianapolis, a politician and a good-natured individual, perhaps too much so, had an excellent presence on horseback, and was willing to learn the tactics. In three months he had mastered the "School of the Battalion," by Scott, and had his command well drilled and disciplined.

Command and responsibilities of war never seemed to fit upon the shoulders of Major Henry S. Lane. Successful as a lawyer and in politics, he was careless as a soldier. On parade he often appeared with his sword and belt in his hand, and he hated a horse. On the march his saddle was always at the disposal of the sick and the footsore. For a shirk Major Lane had the eyes of a hawk. In the service he was reserved and dignified, and desired the respect rather than the fear of the volunteers. Lane was a man of honor and brave to a fault. He was so liked by his regiment that his indifference to military forms, though laughed at, was forgiven and tolerated.

The company officers of the First were perhaps above the average ability, and among them were to be found some remarkable men.²⁷ At the end of six months the First Indiana could very well have been depended upon to give a good account of itself under the most adverse circumstances. Few new military commands ever saw less of the glory of war and more of its monotony and hardships and stood up so well under it all as did this regiment.

The Ohio regiment (recruited along the Ohio), or what was soon known as the Third Indiana, selected as its officers:

²⁶ The officers of the First were not unique when it came to this test. Wallace, *Autobiography*. 116.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

James H. Lane, colonel; William McCarty, lieutenant-colonel, and Willis A. Gorman, of Bloomington, major. The Wabash, or Western, regiment was the least successful in its selection of officers. Joseph Lane, of Vanderburgh, was first chosen colonel, but received his appointment as brigadier-general before the troops left New Albany. An election was ordered to fill the vacancy of colonel in the Second. Captain W. L. Sanderson, of the New Albany Spencer Greys, received the highest vote, but no return was made of the votes of one of the companies. Captain William A. Bowles, of Orange county, had the largest vote in the nine remaining companies. Bowles did not succeed in getting his commission until a new election had been held, at Brazos, Santiago.

In all three regiments the only Whigs elected were Major Henry S. Lane and Lieutenant-Colonel C. C. Nave, of the First. There was considerable protest over this preponderance of Democrats among the officers. There were charges and denials of political intrigue. The Whigs charged the Democrats with selfish motives and the Democrats recriminated upon the Whigs.²⁸

July 5, rations were issued to the troops and the accoutrements assembled. With colors flying and the strains of "Yankee Doodle" floating on the air the First boarded the steamboats Cincinnati and Grace Darling. Some few of the men wore sober countenances. They probably sensed the hardships that lay before them. The men had been at Camp Clark two weeks. In spite of the rather unsanitary conditions, most were in excellent health.

The Second and Third regiments were to leave at intervals of two days, but the Second did not take the boats until July 11. The people of New Albany and vicinity turned out in force to bid their friends farewell. The volunteers kept their eyes on the white dresses and waving handkerchiefs on shore until the boat rounded the bend in the river, then turned their attention to the comforts of the voyage.

²⁸ For an account of the dirty, petty politics at Camp Clark, see Paris Dunning's letter in his own defense. *State Journal*, Nov. 20, 1846, also letter of Thomas O'Neal, *Journal*, Dec. 15, 1846.

THE TRIP TO MEXICO

The trip down the river was not unpleasant. The men were in good spirits and enjoyed themselves in an orderly way. Music and the dance were the commonest diversions. Some of the men had not gone far before they began to feel the touch of military aristocracy, even in a body of volunteers. "Those who hold the commissions get the best pay, the best fare and all the honor. The private performs the work and endures all the privation."²⁹ Some of the companies drew up and signed resolutions indicative of their disapprobation of the course of Governor Whitcomb and his advisors in officering and forming the regiments.

Once past the beautiful bluffs of the Ohio the boats rode forth on the broad Mississippi, with its low-lying banks. Even this ugly and monotonous scenery was beautiful in the eyes of many a zealous youth. They were going to a land rich in history; to the land of Montezuma and Cortez, to campaign through palmetto lands, take cities, fight battles and become heroes.

At New Orleans the volunteers landed below the city, to wait for ships to carry them across the gulf. Here the men were introduced to the soldier's life without the frills. Through mismanagement of the officers the troops were compelled to pitch their tents on a stretch of blubbery slime. There was not enough dry land for a bed. Straw and brush were unattainable, and the ooze went through the army blanket much as water goes through a sieve. Here the men lay, or rather wallowed, for four days. Some of the boys made more or less cutting remarks about General Andrew Jackson for selecting such a site for one of his country's greatest battles. But for some fiery spirits the fact that they were on the scene of the Battle of New Orleans was enough, and, with an old negro peddler for a guide, they explored the field, caring little for the mud and slime.

At last, on July 17 and 18, the ships arrived to carry the troops across the gulf. The men were crowded into these boats pretty much like cattle. Five companies of the Second were economically stowed aboard the Governor Davis. Five

²⁹ Benjamin F. Scribner, *Campaign in Mexico*. 11.

more were put on the Flavio. The fare was rough and of inferior quality, and the men, accustomed to being well fed, had a hard time stomaching it. The chief ration consisted of "some stuff called smoked meat, that was side of hog, half liquid and half solid. When a piece was picked up something like lard oil oozed out."³⁰ This had been taken on at New Albany. The bread supply was also of a low grade. Sugar and coffee were to be had, but there were only two cooking fires for the five companies. Sleeping accommodations were still worse. The lower quarters of most of the boats were so full of freight that the men had little or no room to sleep. Those who found room were almost suffocated. The most desirable place was the upper deck. Here the men were frequently disturbed by the sailors, as they managed the boat, but they reasoned that it was better to be stepped upon than smothered.

The sea was rough and, as this was the first sea experience of most of the Hoosiers, wholesale seasickness resulted. The rain contributed to the general gloom and low spirits of the men.³¹ In one of the ships two hundred men were stowed in a hold four and one-half feet deep. In addition to the volunteers, the crew had to sleep in that hold on the warm nights, with hatches down, a heavy sea running and no air holes. They had to live on coffee, slop-fed pork and dry crackers. "Half the men were seasick and spewing all about you; sometime you would find yourself eating and someone close by would let slip on your dinner and on your clothes."³² The sailors were kind to the sick, and tried to find places for them. The officers were well fed with chicken, beef, pork, potatoes, etc.

As the weather cleared and the sea calmed down the voyage grew more tolerable, and occasionally even enjoyable. The men of the Second organized a debating society on their boat. The soldier members of the New Albany Caliopean Society served as a nucleus, and around this they gathered new mem-

³⁰ Letter from a Fountain Rifleman, *Indiana Sentinel*, Aug. 26, 1846.

³¹ "The crowd, confusion, dirt, the continual heaving of the vessel, the dismal woe-begone countenances of the companions are well calculated to fill the mind with reckless despondency." Scribner, *Campaign in Mexico*. Note of July 22-23, 1846, p. 14.

³² Letter from one of Dearborn county Volunteers, *Brookville American*, Aug. 21, 1846. This boat was eleven days crossing the gulf.

bers of talent. Many grave and powerful speeches were made. One of the questions discussed in a masterly fashion was, "Should the pay of the volunteers be increased?" The arguments on both sides were unanswerable, and consequently unanswered. The debates ended early and were followed by music. The captain of the Spencer Greys captured a young shark, and the men were treated to chowder. In somewhat better humor, they passed the time reading Shakespeare and Headley's *Napoleon* to each other. On one of the boats of the First regiment an enormous turtle was captured. It was laid, back down, on the deck under a tarpaulin. Twice each day the cook resorted to it to supply the officers' mess with soup and steak, and when the men landed, it was still alive.

The beautiful semi-tropical nights were very impressive. The moonlight was of such a whiteness as to dim the stars. Sailing vessels silently passing, like spectres in the night, never failed to inspire the men with awe.

The mouldy blankets and new regimentals were dried in the sea breeze and the mud of the lower Mississippi beaten out. The damage due to seasickness was not so readily repaired. On the second night out the lights of Brazos were sighted. All of the boats except one made Brazos in three days, but this one, driven out of its path by storm, took eleven days to cross the gulf.³³

AFFAIRS IN INDIANA TO THE END OF 1846

Now that the volunteers had been sent to the front, the State turned to its task of caring for their families and raising money to defray the cost of organizing them. As a rule, those who had been dependent for support upon the men who had gone to Mexico, were taken care of by the community in which they lived. Sometimes this assistance was given in an organized fashion, more often by individuals. In Clay county the citizens held a meeting at Bowling Green and resolved to provide for all wants of families of volunteers, and in case of widows, to provide for them and the education of their

³³ The boat carrying the Crawfordsville and Peru companies of the 1st regiment was wrecked on Padros island. Wallace says that it took Major Gorman and two companies of the 3d fourteen days to cross the gulf. Letter of July 26. *State Journal*, Aug. 26.

children until the United States government did so. The word of honor of twelve responsible citizens, whose names were signed, was given to this pledge.

The taxes on the property of the absent soldiers worked some hardships. Real estate was put up for sale in several instances. Even the poll taxes were pushed. The people generally favored an extension of the time limit for the volunteers to January, 1848. An act was passed in January, 1847, providing that the volunteers then in the service or discharged, and who had poll taxes standing against them, be exempted. It also provided that the county treasurers list the county and State taxes of the volunteers and send them to the State treasurer, who was to credit them and enter the receipt on the books.

As winter came on the folks at home did not forget to send to the men in Mexico all the little necessities that would help add to the comforts of a campaign in chilly weather. Shoes, shirts, socks, comforts, etc., were prepared and sent to the front. The ladies of Madison were especially industrious in this work.

December 4, Adjutant-General Reynolds submitted his report to the Governor. In it he told of the unpreparedness of the State, the sudden call for volunteers, the failure of congress, in the excitement of the moment, to furnish in advance the means with which to pay their expenses, the response of the banks, and the successful effort of the State to fill and equip its quota on time. The total amount drawn from the banks by the Governor for transporting the volunteers was \$5,218.78, of which \$3,718.78 was drawn from the Indianapolis branch and \$1,500 from that at Madison. The whole amount drawn was applied except \$47.78, which was returned to Madison.³⁴ The only payment made by the United States to the volunteers before they left Indiana was for clothing, and no part of that was retained to pay the money advanced for other purposes unless with their own consent. Measures had been taken by Postmaster-General Lane to have the balance due the branches at Indianapolis, Madison and Fort Wayne retained out of funds advanced by the United States for the expenses of the volunteers. But as

³⁴ Governor's Message, Dec. 8, 1846.

some of this would never be received on account of death, discharge before payment, etc., and to avoid delay and cut down interest, the Governor recommended an early appropriation to cover the amount due.³⁵

The Governor also recommended an increase in the adjutant-general's salary. The organizing of the volunteers had taken much of the time of General Reynolds from his regular vocation. No clerical assistance had been given him, and he had paid his own travelling expenses to and from Camp Clark on different occasions.

In December the regiment of United States mounted riflemen assembled at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. About 300 of the mounted riflemen, or more than one-third of the regiment, were recruited in Indiana. The companies of Captain Crittenden³⁶ (Company E), Simonson (B), and Tucker (K), were composed entirely of Indianians. The principal arms of the riflemen consisted of a saber and rifle. The latter, with its brass-mounted walnut stock, thirty-two-inch barrel, percussion lock and steel ramrod, was an excellent and handsome piece of work for that time, and much prized by the men.

Captain Abraham Hendricks' company for the Sixteenth United States infantry was raised in and around Madison. This was the third company for Madison, and gave some justification to the claim of the little city that it had produced more soldiers than any place of its size in the United States. Captain Hendricks' company left for Mexico early in April, 1847.³⁷

THE INDIANA TROOPS IN MEXICO

About sunset, July 26, the boats bearing the Indiana volunteers reached Brazos, Santiago. Some of the men of the Second were seated astern, smoking and enjoying a scene unlike anything they had ever witnessed before. The sky was gorgeous and the sun, like a fiery ball, slowly approached the liquid blue into which it suddenly dropped. Long streamers of dark mist shot upwards towards the clouds above. Everything was sublimely beautiful. The sea breeze and rocking of the boat contributed to the effect. At noon

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ This company was recruited by Lieutenant Tipton at Logansport.

³⁷ *Madison Courier*, April 10, 1847.

of the 27th most of the Second and Third regiments landed, and toward evening they pitched their tents and ate supper. Many of the men proceeded immediately to the shore for a sea bath. It was the first experience of the kind for most of the Hoosiers, and thus refreshed, they were almost ready to forget the inconveniences of the trip across the gulf.

The island of Brazos de Santiago was a waste of sand dunes, about three and one-half miles wide. A narrow inlet, not much larger than a canal, led into the bay behind, which was several miles across. On the farther side of the bay was a white tower, the lighthouse on Point Isabel, Taylor's base of operations against Matamoras. A chain of shifting sand dunes was the only scenery revealed as far as the eyes could reach. The soil was naked save for a scanty vine here and there. A solitary hut half buried by the sand and surrounded by drying hides was the only dwelling in sight. There was no town, no grass, not even a tree. This rather barren spot sorely disappointed those who had expected pleasant scenes for fighting.¹

There were close to five thousand troops camped at Brazos. The diarrhea and measles broke out, and unfitted scores for service. The Indiana troops did not suffer so badly at this time as did those from Kentucky. Among the latter there were hardly enough well to care for the sick.² The water, which was slightly salt, was blamed for these diseases, but very likely the food was the main cause. As a strong sea breeze swept the island the heat was not noticed.

The men soon found that they could not live as they had been accustomed all their lives. By common consent, shaving was abandoned. The laundering methods which were used

¹ Lew Wallace in a letter to the *Journal*, July 26, 1846, described Brazos: "The island on which we are encamped is but a vast heap of sand rolled up by the continued flux and reflux of the tide. It is large and roomy but barren and desolate. There is not a tree or a shrub visible. Over it the wind sweeps without obstruction, sprinkling food, eyes, ears, etc., with sand. 'Middling' we serve with a most delightful gusto and from tables as beautifully if not as scientifically greased as the best mahogany we rise strong and healthy, equally ready for a drill, a footrace, or a fight. We make bean soup, fry hot fritters, boil live crabs, swallow watery oysters and while devouring them summon a little empty self congratulation to assist us in chuckling when we think how the folks at home would relish our situation."

² *Indiana Democrat*, Aug. 28, 1846.

did not bring results at all comparable to those the women obtained at home.

The usual number of camp followers of the pedlar class followed the small army. They set up all kinds of shops, hucksters and gambling houses. The sutlers had a monopoly of all the little luxuries and of many necessities, and got monopoly prices for their wares. Ice water was twelve and one-half cents per glass, and ice thirty cents per pound. Writing paper (foolscap) was five cents per sheet; flour, ten cents per pound; tobacco, \$1.50, and bacon, twenty cents; and tin-cups were twenty-five cents each.

The First and Third regiments left July 30 for the mouth of the Rio Grande, eight miles down the beach from Brazos. The Second expected to leave the next day for Barita, farther up the river. On the 30th the Second held another election, to fill the vacancy left by the promotion of Colonel Joseph Lane to the command of the Indiana brigade. William A. Bowles (captain) was elected by about one hundred majority.³ The result was not altogether satisfactory to the minority. It seems that Captain Sanderson had been honestly elected at New Albany, but the loss of the returns from one of the companies broke the election. It was evident to all that Colonel Bowles was not a man fitted for military command. Commenting on his election, a member of the Second said: "How we have been gulled and led about by a set of political demagogues, who, regardless of the fearful responsibility, have forced themselves into positions they possess no qualifications to fill, with a hope thereby to promote their future political aggrandizement. O, shame on such patriotism!"⁴

THE VOLUNTEERS AT CAMP BELKNAP

The Second and Third regiments left Brazos for Barita, nine miles by land and sixteen by water, above the mouth of the Rio Grande, on August 3.⁵ They pitched their tents opposite Barita, and, in honor of the inspector-general named their place Camp Belknap, which became General Lane's

³ W. S. Spicely now became first lieutenant and John Gullett, second lieutenant.

⁴ B. F. Scribner, *Campaign in Mexico*. 21.

⁵ General Taylor left Matamoras for Camargo, Aug. 5, with a few regulars and one-half the Texas Rangers.

headquarters. Clearing the chaparral round about was troublesome work, as not only all the bushes had thorns, but all the insects as well. The encampment was beautifully situated on a grassy ridge. In front lay the Rio Grande and Barita, while in the rear the wide plain was besprinkled with salt lakes. The situation was not very desirable, however. The mouldy crackers and fat bacon had to be lugged through the swamps and thorns, and the rain did its part. The clear nights and bright skies of the "Sunny South" were yet to be experienced.

Sometimes the men found it hard to bear the ignorance and inattention of the field officers. Perhaps their ignorance was not always to blame for badly selected ground and frequent want of full rations, but certainly they were the ones to whom the soldiers looked for redress of grievances. Other regiments near by, better officered, fared better, and the Indiana volunteers were not long becoming aware of this fact. Members of the Second visited another corps and were surprised to find that for some time they had been drawing excellent flour, good pickles and molasses. This was the first time the men of the First became aware of the fact that molasses could be obtained except from the sutlers, at seventy-five cents a quart.

One of the congenial groups in the Second at Camp Belknap was the Spencer Greys of New Albany. These men got along together very well and, as a rule, were a jolly set. Their entertainments not only succeeded with themselves, but they attracted other companies with their music and dances. Whether carrying river water in camp kettles, across the swamps, waist deep, or caring for their accoutrements, these boys usually went after it singing and speech-making.

The daily program at Camp Belknap was somewhat as follows: At daybreak the troops were aroused by reveille and had company or squad drill for two hours, after which eight men and a sergeant or corporal from each company were detailed for guard. Company drill came again at four o'clock and regimental at five. The intervals between were occupied in getting wood, water and provisions, and cooking, washing, and caring for the camp. Hunting parties sometimes went

out and killed fowls, cattle, wolves and snakes. One of the messes served a seven-foot rattlesnake for dinner.

By October time began to drag heavily on the Second, which was still waiting for orders. Colonel Lane's regiment (the Third) had moved up to Palo Alto, seven miles from Matamoras.⁶ General Lane still drilled the Second, as its colonels were both sick and one, Colonel Bowles, had gone home. The evil results of inaction were as dangerous and as much to be feared as battle. The moral standards of all were affected, and some seemed to have suffered a total loss of moral principle. The young men, when at home, were more or less moral from habit, but camp life with its hardships and drudgery and absence of refining features, brought out all traits of character, the bad often quicker than the good.

After the rainy season was past the nights became very pleasant. The moonlight was clear enough to read by. The idle soldiers let their minds and imaginations wander back to home and its joys. Then came refreshing slumbers, interrupted only by the musical mosquitos and industrious ants.⁷ Sanitary conditions were improved with cooler weather, and but few were confined to the tents.

Early in November quite an excitement stirred the camp as the result of orders received by General Lane to hold the regiment ready to march at an hour's notice. After that he drilled it twice a day. The prospect of leaving so elated the men that they indulged in a number of musicals and jollifications, Mexican style. Some of the boys had picked up a little Spanish and some Mexican dances, and furnished amusement free of charge.

The Second remained in darkness as to its future movements, but hoped to move toward Tampico, to active service and fame. General R. Patterson assured the Indiana men that it was no mark of disrespect to Indiana troops that they had not been pushed forward, nor would it affect their reputation.

By the end of the month the Tampico fever raged higher than ever. The general impression was that the regiment would leave within a week. At last, December 3, came the

⁶ The Third started for Saltillo, Dec. 9.

⁷ Scribner, *Campaign in Mexico*. 34.

long-awaited order to embark on the first boat for Camargo, and thence to Monterey. The joyous excitement gave way in a celebration lasting most of the night. Several companies left immediately, leaving three to take the next boat. On the night of the 6th these companies had a peculiar adventure. They were disturbed by what they thought was the enemy's bugle. They were ordered to lie near their arms, and slept fitfully until about 2:00 A. M., when they heard the call "to arms, to arms!" Much excitement and rushing about ensued. All fell into line and marched steadily, determining to win glory, and thinking of the praise they would receive. Anxiously, they awaited the return of the detachment. After many agonizing minutes it returned and reported to the general. He dismissed the men, saying that their only enemies, the wolves, had retired to the chaparral. Crestfallen, the men returned to their tents. Very few jokes were sprung at this time.

December 10 found Camp Belknap deserted. The place that a few months previous had contained 8,000 souls was without an inhabitant. There was one regret mixed with the pleasure of leaving Camp Belknap. There, the volunteers could at least hear from home regularly, while further up the river the service would be doubtful.

The three companies which were last to leave were packed on the stamer Whiteville. The captain would not let the men sleep on the boiler deck, but placed them all in the boiler-room. This angered the men thoroughly, and was the occasion for an outburst against the abuses suffered.

Behold the sacrifices of the soldier. He forfeits his self-respect, sense of right and wrong, his liberty of speech, his freedom of action and his rank in society. All this for the public good. And what is his reward? One ration per day, seven dollars per month, and the cold indifference of the hireling citizen and of the avaricious and ambitious officer. How many such officers, when at home, in the newspaper articles or public orations, give vent to fires of eloquence and patriotism. They would shed the last drop of blood for their dear country, but seem mighty unwilling to shed the first drop.⁸

The Second was all encamped at Camargo by December 9, when it proceeded to break and shoe mules for a pack train.

⁸ Scribner, *Campaign in Mexico*. 42.

THE FIRST AT THE MOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE

The First arrived at the encampment near Barita, August 2, as did all the Indiana volunteers, and expected to remain there a few weeks before receiving marching orders for Camargo and Monterey. Great was their surprise and dismay when they were ordered back to the mouth of the Rio Grande, to guard the rear. Colonel Drake reported the men very sore at this, but said they would try and obey orders.⁹ The order for the First to proceed to Camp Belknap came from Brigadier-General Lane, but the order to go into garrison duty at the mouth of the river came from General Taylor, in headquarters at Matamoras, so there was nothing to do but obey. "Had the men known in advance of the misery and humiliation awaiting them in the Rio Grande camp, despair would have overcome all discipline, and the eight hundred men would have become an ungovernable mob."¹⁰ Lew Wallace says there is not another instance in the American wars of a command so wantonly neglected and brutally mislocated.

The camp at the mouth was inherited from the First Mississippi Regiment under Colonel Jefferson Davis. A sense of desolateness pervaded it on the first night. On the right of the camp, and separating it from the sea were long rows of sand dunes. A few hundred yards to the left was the river. At its mouth it was about two hundred yards wide, very rapid, muddy and full of shrimps which could be seen at any time of the day and every bucket of water had to be strained to keep from them. To the north the camp faced a monotonous stretch of land, level as a floor, treeless, unending, and subject to tidal overflow. Across the river was a Mexican smuggler village nicknamed Bagdad.

The rations, issued three times per week, consisted of beans, coffee, sugar, pickled pork, flour and biscuit, with no vegetables. The biscuits were disk-shaped and alive with brown bugs. They were often the cause of much fun. The soldiers on inspection frequently substituted pieces of them for gunflints.

The nerve-racking monotony which overspread everything

⁹ Letter from Colonel Drake, *Indiana Democrat*, Sept. 11, 1846.

¹⁰ Wallace, *Autobiography*, 123.

was all the worse as it was unrelieved by hope. It was only broken now and then by the chance news which drifted in. The regiment heard of Taylor's operations after leaving Matamoras and of the enemy abandoning Camargo. With a regiment at Matamoras the First felt that it was entirely useless to keep a regiment at the mouth of the Rio Grande. A company would have done just as well.

Then to make life almost unbearable came disease, chronic diarrhea. In after years members of the First shuddered at the name. The river water which the men drank, the spoiled pork called meat, and the bad cooking, which was common, all made the appearance, sooner or later, of this dreaded disease practically inevitable. The symptoms were unmistakable. A man may have been in perfect health when he went into camp, in a few weeks a change came about; his cheeks took on the color of old gunny sacks, under his jaws the skin became flabby, his eyes filmy and sinking, his voice flat and he moved about listlessly. Instead of supporting his gun the gun supported him. All knew that he had been to the surgeon and received an opium pill, the only remedy in the meagre medicinal outfit. Another week and his place was vacant. A mess mate answered for him. There was no need of looking for him in a hospital. Although a fixed post, the camp boasted no hospital and he was to be found, one of six, in a tent nine by nine feet. Under such conditions night did not bring enough coolness to soothe the fever of the day. His only nurses were his companions. They did their best, which often was not very much. In his delirium the victim prayed for some delicacy, for something new to eat. He received the very food which made him sick, bean soup, unleavened slap-jacks, and bacon. Another week and the weakened man was giving all his remaining strength to decency. Then mind and will went down together.¹¹

There were days when two hundred on dress parade was encouraging. The hours of daylight seemed too short to take care of the funerals, so the hours of night received their share. The dead march rendered with fife and muffled drum became a daily occurrence.

After the novelty of watching the sea lost its charm, there

¹¹ Lew Wallace, *Autobiography*, 126.

was nothing to do but speculate on the future of the regiment. Colonel Drake received his share of the blame for existing conditions, yet it was not his fault. He did all in his power to save the well and keep the sick from dying. When the situation became so bad he sent for Major Lane and told him that he was ready to do an unsoldierly thing, go see Taylor at Matamoras without leave. Lane went along and the two men made an earnest plea on behalf of their regiment. They told how their medicines had run out and calls for more had gone unheeded. But General Taylor, hardened to service, paid no heed, and the First remained at the Rio Grande in its misery. Taylor left Matamoras for Monterey in September. The First continued to hope that it would get to go along. A commissariat man gave the death blow, however, when he brought definite news that Drake's Regiment had been left out.

Deaths continued until all the lumber in camp had been used for coffins. Next all the cracker barrel staves and gun boxes were exhausted. After that the only coffin was the blanket. With burial the troubles did not cease. The winds moved the dunes and left the naked corpses exposed. Late in September when the heat became intense, there was not even a bush under which to hide. The only hope for better health lay in cooler weather, which was expected with October. As for any hopes of getting into the war, the First gave up all they had ever had and resigned themselves to fate. Some fully expected to remain at the Rio Grande until the volunteers were discharged.¹² The general sentiment of the regiment was expressed in a letter from J. M. Myers to the Brookville *American* when he said that the men of the First would never get to see Camargo unless they paid their own expenses, for Indiana troops were but seldom called for.

THE INDIANA BRIGADE MOVES TOWARD SALTILLO

After the officers failed to get their troops in on the Tampico expedition, the attention of the Indiana volunteers was turned to a forward movement toward Saltillo. General Patterson issued conditional marching orders to Brigadier-General Lane to proceed with the Indiana Brigade (except

¹² "Sketches in Camp No. 7," by an ex-reporter in Perry, *Indiana in the Mexican War*, 100.

Colonel Drake's regiment which was to remain at the mouth of the Rio Grande) to Monterey as soon as the Tennessee cavalry arrived at Matamoras. Colonel Clark was to inform General Lane of the time of the arrival of the cavalry, but this he neglected to do and there was considerable delay in the march.¹³

The Second and Third regiments as noted above, had already started for Camargo and Monterey.¹⁴ On December 9, Major Lane came to camp in great haste with orders for the First to move on to Monterey.

The joy at this deliverance was expressed in different ways. Some thanked God on their knees and others rushed to the sutler's tent to show their thanks by imbibing of the best that was to be had. It was about two hundred and ten miles by river to Camargo and on land one hundred and eighty more to Walnut Springs. The sick were to be left in the hospital at Matamoras.

The next day after receiving the orders the First embarked for Camargo on the "J. E. Roberts" and the "Rough and Ready." John Gillespie of the Fountain Riflemen fell overboard and was drowned before the boat started. No towns were passed until the boats came to Reynosa. It was a miserable cluster of huts of mud and cane, worse looking than a beaver dam. The evergreens, tropical shrubbery, leafless thorn bushes and beautiful flowers offered a landscape, which contrasted pleasantly with the squalid Mexican villages.

December 14 the "J. E. Roberts" arrived at Camargo, three

¹³ Reed, *Campaign in Mexico*.

¹⁴ December 8, four companies of the Third struck tents and boarded the steamer *Corvette* for Camargo. The *Corvette* started up the river the following day. On the 10th the men arrived at Rienaco and fixed quarters for the night. In the usual search for arms Captain Boardman took twenty men as guard and went toward a light which was about a mile from the boat. When within about twenty yards the guards were placed and the captain, together with two other men, approached the light. They found it to be a small rancho, with a man, woman and two children in it. They were much frightened. After a thorough search the men failed to find any arms. As they started to leave one of the men reminded the captain that he had not searched the bed where the woman was lying. Captain Boardman went up to it at once and as he began fumbling around suddenly saying, "Boys, here's a gun!" The woman started jabbering and making signs, but the men could not understand her so went up to assist their captain. They soon found that the captain had hold of the woman's leg and told him that he had made a serious mistake: what he had found was legs and not arms.—Related in a letter from L. B. McK— of the Third, *Triweekly Journal*, March 17, 1847.

miles up the San Juan.¹⁵ The town was as bad as it had been represented. The flat-roofed stone buildings were dilapidated and falling. The mud and cane houses looked more like cow houses and hog pens than human dwellings. The next day old "Rough and Ready" brought up the remaining six companies of the First and they began breaking mules at once. The Third had already finished with their own pack train and departed on the 16th. Two days later everything was put in readiness for the trip to Monterey. The men were completely outfitted in arms, canteens, etc., in preparation for the forced march. On the 19th the whole camp rose before daybreak. All were anxious to go, but some who were not well were left in the hospital because there were enough wagons only for provisions. A wearisome and tedious journey was expected, but the haversacks contained only bread, boiled pickled pork, coffee and salt. The road was ankle deep in dust and it rose in such clouds as to choke the men and make it impossible to see the company ahead. At the end of the second day, after a twenty-mile march with full equipment, the men were pretty well exhausted. Their noses were so sore with blowing that it was almost impossible to touch them and their lips were so blistered that it was hard to tell when they were closed. The heat, dust and salt pork produced such a thirst that the men drank heavily of a pond of water covered with a green scum. Sore feet and aching limbs so tortured the men that every time they stopped long enough they gave them water treatment. The bread ran so low occasionally that one-half a loaf served eleven men of the Second for two meals.

The fifth day of marching found the two regiments about half way to Monterey. Feet were becoming tougher and limbs ceased to ache so much. The men even began to notice the scenery which was becoming wilder and more impressive. The rising sun cast its beams on the mountains on the left. The whole chain appeared like piles of burnished silver.¹⁶ "The wonders of war are gradually revealing themselves to my sight. There is nothing else on earth in which splendor is mingled to a greater degree with misery. It is strange also

¹⁵ The Second also arrived on the 14th—Letter of L. B. McK—, *State Journal*, March 17, 1847.

¹⁶ Scribner, *Campaign in Mexico*, 43.

how soon it blunts the finer feelings of our nature and absolutely murders all sympathy or pity.”¹⁷

As the men neared the end of their march their feet grew heavy but their hearts were light, for at last they were to become a part of the army. They were within six miles of Walnut Springs, where they were to camp, when without warning the column jammed and came to a stop. A courier rode up and gave Colonel Drake a dispatch. The colonel reddened as he read it in the saddle. He had the men face about and then started to read it. The task was too much for him and he could not finish it. He handed it to the men. The First was to go back to its sand hill at the mouth of the Rio Grande. The troops of the First were put into motion and had to take back as it were, every one of the three hundred and ninety miles which they had advanced. Many of the unfortunate men of the First received the farewell of friends in the Second with tears in their eyes. The order had come from General Taylor. Every man felt that his regiment was being purposely punished but why, he knew not. Two motives were generally offered to explain Taylor's conduct. He either wished to punish Colonel Drake for his unmilitary request to move the regiment, or he wished to reprimand General Patterson for his assumption of authority in giving the orders to march. Patterson in later years said he was acting from pity and not from orders from headquarters. This sudden disappointment brought the following estimate of Taylor from one of the members of the First:

The General who could serve innocent soldiers of his command so scurrily, allowing them under such circumstances to get within two hours of his camp, after a movement of such length and labor, must have been of a soul which no successes could have made great.¹⁸

Lieutenant Colonel Nave was so resentful at the treatment of his regiment that he resigned. The four hundred or so survivors elected Major Lane to fill his place.

As the regiment was on its way back to Camargo it was overtaken by another order. Taylor had evidently relented as he lightened the sentence by stating that Colonel Drake was to send two companies to the mouth of the river and keep the

¹⁷ Lew Wallace, Letter, *Indiana State Journal*, Jan. 22, 1847.

¹⁸ Lew Wallace, *Autobiography*, 144.

rest at Matamoras. This put all in better spirits. Rations were issued for four days and the men took the boats for their return journey. On the fifth day they were stalled and they were not yet half way. The men had to get out and forage. Three were ambushed by the Mexicans so their comrades stormed and took a small town. They did nothing to the inhabitants but captured four beeves which proved very usefull.

At Matamoras the men of the First rested from their long march. For the first time in eight months the men were able to lie down to sleep with a roof over their heads. Companies A and H (Roberts and McDougal) encamped in the Main Plaza; company F (Lewis) at Ft. Paredes; company C (Milroy) at Fort Brown, and the remaining six companies in barracks at the lower Plaza. The regiment drilled in the Plaza in the heart of the city. There were some social functions to enliven the soldier's existence on garrison duty. The Mexican belles proved great waltzers and the men showed their appreciation by serenades. Colonel Drake was made civil governor and military commandant at Matamoras, succeeding Colonel Clark of the Eighth infantry. Considerable responsibility fell upon the colonel, as he came in contact with local usages and customs so old that they were practically law. It was necessary for him to arbitrate every little difficulty and to employ an interpreter.

The First had hardly settled in their new quarters before orders again came to proceed to Walnut Springs, this time from Adjutant General Bliss. For the third time the regiment covered the long route to Monterey. This time it reached its destination without interruption. As the men drew near General Taylor's headquarters they became anxious to see the general in spite of the poor treatment they had received from him. They expected to find a magnificent tent with staff officers round about in flashy uniforms, surrounded by orderlies. They found only a white flagpole on which was a tattered, dirty flag, a dingy tent, flap up in front, and under it a plain deal table and a few camp chairs. The troops marched past to be reviewed. Few saluted. They saw no one to salute. Leaning against the flag staff was a small man, dressed in an unbuttoned blouse of no particular color, a limp-bosomed shirt far from white, hang-down collar, no tie, what was once

light blue trousers, and a pair of heavy marching shoes red with use. A slouch wool hat was drawn low over an unshaven face, dull and expressionless.¹⁹ Most of the men did not learn until afterwards that this was General Taylor.

Walnut Springs was the site of the battle of Monterey. It was four miles from the city, and an ideal spot for a camp. Towering peaks rose majestically on all sides and the place was well shaded with the largest and straightest trees that the men had seen in the country.

Soon after the arrival of the Indiana troops General Taylor left with his command for Victoria. The Second Indiana did not remain long at Walnut Springs but hurried on toward Saltillo, as Colonel Haddon had received an order from General Lane to that effect. With it came the report that Santa Anna was within two days' march of Saltillo. The regiment had sixty-five miles yet to travel. It had already covered one hundred and fifty, carrying heavier burdens than the regiments from the other States.²⁰ Just as camp was being broken general orders arrived giving a day's rest as the provisions were not yet ready. The troops spent this time visiting the cathedral, markets, tanneries, and other scenes of interest in Monterey. The details of the battle of Monterey were related and discussed.

Before daybreak, December 27, the Second started for Saltillo. In Monterey the regiment attracted quite a bit of attention because of the healthy appearance of all its members. At night it halted at the Shrine of St. Catherine near the mountain pass. On the way from Monterey some of the men visited the gardens of General Arista. Compared to the country through which the troops had marched in the past, these suggested the Garden of Eden.

The road to Saltillo was broken and rocky, the wind blowing the dust to the rear in suffocating clouds. As it approached Reneonida it led through a grove of trees which formed a shady archway above, while here and there were enormous century plants from fifteen to twenty feet high. On the morning of December 31, the regiment marched twelve miles to a place called Warm Springs, where the Second

¹⁹ Lew Wallace, *Autobiography*, 133.

²⁰ Scribner, *Campaign in Mexico*, 51.

pitched its tents at Camp Butler. The dust, wind, and cold made it very uncomfortable. Wood was doled out two cords to the regiment, so the parcels were rather small by the time it got to the messes. The discomforts affected the spirits of all. A few days after the arrival of his regiment at Camp Butler, Colonel Bowels returned from Indiana loaded with letters. The men waited eagerly for their names to be called and hurriedly tore open the letters.

Generals W. J. Worth and William O. Butler were at Saltillo with that part of the army which Taylor had left, 3,500 in all, 1,400 of whom were Indianians. On the last day of the year, 1846, General Worth's division left Saltillo to join Scott in his expedition against the capital of Mexico. After January 1 the Second and Third Indiana were the sole occupants of the camp, but General Lane took the regiments into the city to take the place of General Worth's troops, January 10.²¹

Saltillo, an old city of about 12,000 inhabitants, rested on the side of a hill. It had formerly been the capital of the States of Coahuila, Texas, and New Leon. The streets were narrow and the sidewalks roughly paved with stones. Lime-water fountains and streams were abundant, and the water was free and good. The flat-roofed houses were built of stone and mud bricks, whitened with plaster. Two of the five churches were impressive cathedrals. These the volunteers had an excellent opportunity to examine in their search for arms.

Around and above the city towered the mountains which reached into the clouds. At sunrise and sunset they reflected many gorgeous colors, and the men thought they surpassed all descriptions of Alpine scenery. The abrupt sides supported no trees or vegetation, and the separate peaks stood clearly outlined like the towers of a castle. The clear atmosphere apparently reduced distances many times, as the men found when what they estimated to be a couple of miles stretched into fifteen or twenty.

The soil in the valleys was productive, but the seasons were irregular and crops were produced only by irrigation from the small mountain streams. Wheat, corn, oats, barley, beans, cabbage and sweet potatoes were plentiful and the

²¹ Reed, *Campaign in Mexico*.

market was well supplied with pork, beef, chickens, mutton, goat meat, eggs, and cabbage. Firewood was scarce and small donkey-loads brought in from the country sold at thirty-seven and one-half cents per load.

The people were very much alike, all dusky brown, eyes dark and sparkling, of light build, straight and active. At first the women were afraid of the volunteers, but after they saw the orderly behavior of the troops, they came forth and, dressed in their best, became sociable and at ease.²²

The troops were pleasantly situated and furnished with comfortable quarters and good provisions. Discipline was strict as an attack was expected daily. The many little duties kept the men pretty well occupied. One hundred men were detailed from each of the Indiana regiments for guard duty and the rest worked on the fortifications.

²² From a description of Saltillo, Maj. A. F. Morrison, letter to *State Journal*, March 15, 1847.

(To be continued)